

APPENDIX A.

Mr. A. F. HALCOMBE to the Hon. J. D. ORMOND.

SIR,—

Immigration Office, Wellington, 22nd June, 1872.

I have the honor to inform you that on the 5th inst. I proceeded from Marton, Rangitikei, in company with Mr. John Marshall and Mr. Charles Galpin, settlers of that district, for the purpose of exploring the block of land recently acquired from the Native owners, which is situate between the Turakina River and the Porewa Stream.

The objects I had in view in undertaking the journey were—

1. To ascertain the general character and quality of the block.
2. The facilities or otherwise of opening it up for settlement.
3. To find whether any favourable sites for special settlements along probable road lines existed.
4. Whether any line through the block could be found which might hereafter form part of a main communication from the settled district of Rangitikei to the Murimutu Plains.

We started on foot from the house of Mr. Galpin, which lies about three miles south of the northern boundary of the Rangitikei District, and travelling direct north from his house, reached the boundary line of the Rangitikei Block at the point indicated in the accompanying tracing.

From this point we travelled in a straight line northward and slightly by east, encountering very broken country as we were crossing at right angles tributary streams of the Turakina River. This course we continued for two days, until we arrived at what is evidently the main drain of the block towards the Turakina River. This is a small stream running through a narrow sandy valley, covered with coarse grass and manuka scrub. We could trace its course bearing S.W. for some miles down below the point where we reached it, and we observed its valley widening out, with alternations of small fern flats with manuka scrub and patches of white pine bush. From information gathered from the Maoris and from other sources, I learn that this stream receives the waters of nearly all those we had crossed, that it falls into the Turakina River about nine miles above the village, and that the valley maintains the same general features throughout.

The next day we ascended this stream for a few miles, when finding the valley contract, and walking in consequence difficult, we mounted a high ridge on the eastern side, and still keeping the general direction, found ourselves towards evening above a beautiful little lake about fifty acres in extent, completely buried among the high wooded hills. We named it Lake Marshall, and it is evidently the primary source of supply to the stream before referred to.

We camped at night on a very low, short, narrow saddle at the northern end of the lake, and about 15 ft. above it, and the next morning we were surprised to find a wide gully from 80 ft. to 100 ft. deep, opening out immediately behind us on to a large and comparatively open block—a confused jumble of low hills covered with fern and light scrub; these hills shedding their waters to the Turakina River through a gully running west and south, and circling round the other side of the hills which surround the lake on its western side.

Still travelling N.E., skirting this low-lying block for a short distance, we came on a very low narrow fern ridge or saddle, which is the watershed of the Turakina and Porewa Streams.

From this point we returned, and going S.E. descended by an almost imperceptible gradient through an open gully between fern hills till we made the valley of the Porewa, about five miles from the watershed saddle. Passing through a mile or two of flat bush, we came upon the Porewa Stream and the Native track, which is their high road to the interior, and found that we were about twelve miles above where the boundary line of the Rangitikei Block crosses the stream. Thence we made Marton again on the 11th instant.

As to the character of the block, it is extremely broken, although every part of it will be easily accessible from the main drainage stream up the different gullies. The only flat ground in the part we visited is a narrow strip in the main valley above mentioned, and a broader belt along the Porewa Stream.

Excepting in the valley of the Porewa, there is little heavy timber. The hills are covered with light scrubby bush as a rule, and we found not the slightest difficulty in making our way anywhere, not having to use our billhooks for more than a mile along the whole journey.

The soil is rich, light, and open, of rather a sandy character, and would be very easy and cheaply laid down in English grass. From the configuration of the country, it is naturally extremely well watered, and, although some of the hills appear high by comparison with their neighbours, the country as a whole lies low, so that the wind would not be much felt in any part of it.

It is a perfect paradise for the explorer or the pioneer settler. Stray cattle from the Rangitikei district have for the last twenty years been breeding undisturbed, and now roam everywhere in large mobs. The food supply we carried consisted of biscuit, with pepper and salt. The rifle or gun supplied us daily at evenfall with fresh meat, without going 100 yards out of our way to obtain it.

Regarding the probable road lines and prospects of obtaining good sites for settlement, I would observe,—

1. That the chief part of the newly-purchased block can be easily opened up by a very level and direct road, describing a semicircle from the western point of its southern boundary at the Turakina River; thence by the main drainage stream above referred to, either by Lake Marshall or through the low rolling hills (called *Parō Karetu* by the Natives) to the low watershed of the Porewa; thence to and down the Porewa Stream to the eastern point of the southern boundary. Such a road would be about thirty miles in length, and would open up the whole block to Turakina on the one side, and to the Rangitikei, *en route* for Wellington, on the other.

2. The greater part of this road line would afford a continuous line of location for small farmers, and block settlements could be made in the *Parō Karetu*, at the northern boundary of the block, and on another so-called “clearing,” named the “Ongo,” about five miles up the Porewa Stream from the south-east corner of the block.